General Film questions

Questions about the film

* Who are the main and minor characters?  How are they connected to each other?
* Where is the film set?  What is the time span of the film?
* What is the main plot?  What are the subplots, if any?  Trace the plot through place and time.  Identify the different roles played by the characters in the plot.
* What are the themes of the film?
* Consider the acting and direction?  To what extent do these enhance or detract from the film?

Questions about the history in the film

* Does the film capture the look of the time? – Costumes? Sets? – how do these affect the attempt at historical accuracy?  Do they help to make the film more realistic in order to limit questions about the film’s accuracy?
* **Is the plot historically accurate?  How much is true? How much is embellished? How much is invented? – What is the utility of film as a historical document <you’ll need some research on at least one issue in the film to answer this>**

Other questions to ponder

* Does the film create an accurate impression of the time?  Are the liberties taken with the truth useful in depicting a greater truth about the time, place, or person?  Are there any clues in the presentation of the film that make one realize that the film is not trying to be historically accurate?
* Does the film purport to be a piece of history or does it only seek to tell a compelling story – is it historical fiction? Pure fiction?
* To what extent are the misrepresentations of the past harmful to understanding the people, places, and time?  Who or what is harmed by the film?  Is credit given to someone that does not deserve it?
* Is it Hollywood or is it history?  Can the two be merged at all?  What does the film tell you about a film’s ability to tell any truth?  Or the ability of history to be shaped into film?  Is historical fiction a legitimate medium for presenting the past?  Would a documentary be a better?  What would a documentary of the same subject look like?
* What should a history teacher think of this film?  How could it be used in the classroom?